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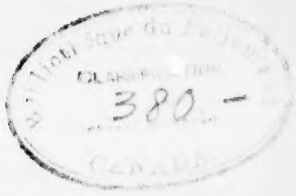
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CONSIDERATIONS IN FAVOR OF A DOMINION DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.

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BY THE SECRETARY OF THE DOMINION BOARD OF TRADE.

The necessities of nations have given rise to multiplied and increasing divisions of departmental detail in carrying on Government, and much could be said about the importance of the functions of Ministers forming Cabinets in countries which enjoy responsible government. But after all that might be adduced regarding the several offices, there is probably none that could now have an interest or influence surpassing that of a Department as yet only specifically recognised, it is believed, in France and Germany,—viz., a Department of Commerce.

It seems evident that particular attention must be given in future by Governments to their internal trade and commerce, and to facilitating their expansion; and the most casual observer cannot but realise that the bonds which are to hold nations together in friendly alliance, will, hereafter, consist of those which are the outcome of commercial arrangements or treaties,—rather than those of mere political affinities or compacts; and when that consummation is attained, the prestige of the War Department, as well as of some others, will have been eclipsed by the Department of Commerce, presided over by a Cabinet Minister. It will further be evident, that in any international treaty or convention which may be ratified, the country whose statesmen are most intimately acquainted with the minutiae of its industries and commerce, will derive the most substantial advantages. Of course, it is not meant to be implied that there is no provision made under existing arrangements, in this or other countries where there is no special Department of Commerce, for consideration by Governments of commercial and trade matters,—but Commerce, *per se*, is only treated casually, and not with that deference which is due to its immense and growing importance. The experience of investigators, both in the United States and Canada, is that official records and statistics relating to commerce are lamentably defective;—while of Great Britain it has been said:—"There has not been an hour, day or night, in the past thirty-five years, when her Government has ceased to be at work investigating, debating, reporting, experimenting, legislating; adjudicating, and solving the single problem: How shall England secure to her internal commerce the lowest rate of charge for transportation which is consistent with the just claims of the capital embarked in her channels of commerce?"

The Question in Great Britain.

Misapprehension has prevailed, and still exists, regarding the functions and duties of the Board of Trade of Great Britain. As a governmental department, that Board has been commonly supposed to be specially charged with the duty of watching over, and, when needful, protecting the manifold interests of commerce and industry, in their relations to other branches of the public service, and to foreign countries. The President

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of that Board is not necessarily a member of the Imperial Cabinet,—he has *usually* been a Cabinet Minister, but the present President is not,—the functions of the numerous branches of his department consisting simply of details performed at the instance of the other departments; it has, in short, been said to “have to do with every imaginable thing in the world, but not with trade.” When the Treaty of Commerce between Great Britain and France inaugurated a freer commercial policy on the Continent of Europe, it was found that British interests frequently suffered for want of active and zealous vigilance on the part of the Government,—and a movement was begun by the Associated Chambers of Commerce in favor of the establishment of a Department of Commerce. The result of the agitation was the appointment of a Royal Commission in 1864, to inquire into the working connections of the Board of Trade with the Foreign Office. The report of the Commissioners showed that the Board of Trade had neither the power nor the organization for the performance of such functions in relation to commerce,—although one of its branches (*since abolished*, the duties being now performed in other offices.)—was designated the “Commercial Department.” In fact, the Commission demonstrated that every department in Her Majesty’s Government “decides upon questions having the most important bearing upon commerce, with reference only to its own particular sphere; thus the India Office imposes duties upon manufactured cotton without considering how the Lancashire trade is affected or injured thereby; the Colonial Office concludes treaties with the United States of America, giving privileges to American produce which British goods do not possess; the Foreign Office concluded conventions for the sugar trade, which ruined many British refiners; the Treasury has proposed alterations in monetary and banking systems of the country without duly considering the effects they might have upon trade: taxes are imposed or removed without due regard to the interests affected by them.”

The Report of the Commission also shows that many of the measures above referred to would not have been taken, or very much modified, if each Minister had been obliged to consult a colleague charged with the duty of considering the ultimate effects of every measure upon the interests confided to his care.

The Association of Chambers of Commerce are renewing the efforts commenced so many years ago, and in their latest memorial to the Right Honorable Mr. Disraeli, they say:—

Your Memorialists submit that if such a department of the Government existed, the commercial public would have only one authority to whom to address their representations, assured that their matured and legitimate opinions would have a zealous advocate in the Cabinet, whose advice may be sometimes overruled by higher, more general, and even merely political reasons, but not without having been thoroughly discussed upon their merits.

It is by no means intended to convey the impression that commercial men desire to see trade interests overrule all others, for they know that there may be considerations of high State policy, or even facts not known, or sufficiently appreciated, by the general public, which may render the immediate fulfilment of their most legitimate demands inexpedient. But they feel themselves justified in expressing their strong conviction, that as hardly any great question can arise in any department of Government, which has not a more or less direct bearing upon trade, a satisfactory consideration of commercial interests can only be secured by their representation in the Cabinet by a Minister possessing the same power and influence as his colleagues who preside over the other chief departments of the State.

Such a Minister, animated with a due sense of his responsibility as the official guardian of the mighty and ever-widening interests of the industry of this great empire, would be summoned, as a matter of right to every Cabinet Council. He would there be enabled to see that no measure undertaken in the interest, primarily, of the national revenue or of finance—no diplomatic arrangement with foreign States, and no Act of colonial legislation requiring the sanction of the Government at home—received that sanction without its effect on the interests of the commerce and industry of England having been first duly considered and discussed, and its probable consequence to those interests maturely weighed. He would further, from the means of information afforded by frequent communication (on an equal footing) with other Cabinet Ministers, and by communication

with the representatives of commercial interests among the people, be enabled to discern betimes openings and opportunities for promoting those interests, and to press them with authority and effect on the attention of the entire Cabinet.

The Movement in the United States.

The question of establishing a Department of Commerce in the Government of the United States has engaged more or less of the attention of commercial men. A movement in that direction was commenced in 1865, by the adoption of the following resolution at the Detroit Commercial Convention:—

“Resolved,—That in order to relieve some of the Departments of the General Government, and especially that of the Treasury, from many of the details with which they are now crowded,—and in order to secure for the various industrial interests of the country the benefits of a systematised, experienced, and permanent Board, it is the judgment of this Convention that a Government Board of Trade should be formed, for the especial oversight and care of all questions relating to our agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial interests, for the compilation of statistics, for inquiring into casualties, and for such other subjects as may properly be included in such a Department.”

The subject was afterwards taken up by the National Board of Trade of the United States, at several of its meetings, the idea of that body seeming to be that the Department of Commerce should be an *executive* branch of the Federal Government, the model being apparently the British Board of Trade. Congress was memorialised in favor of a Department of Commerce in the winter of 1869; and the views of the National Board on the subject were subsequently embodied in a proposed Bill, of which the following were the main features:—

1. The Department to be charged with the supervision and care of the agricultural, commercial, manufacturing and mining interests of the United States.
2. With the execution of laws relating to trade and commerce, both foreign and domestic,—to rivers and harbors,—to light houses, port charges, quarantine, emigration, pilotage, tonnage, and the measurement, registry, enrolment and licensing of vessels; and generally of all matters included in the navigation laws.
3. With the execution of the laws imposing duties on imports, and taxes and excises pertaining to internal revenue.
4. With the collecting, collating and tabulating of statistics relating to the agriculture, commerce, manufactures and mining.

There is at present before the Senate a Bill, proposing to establish a Department of Commerce in the United States Government, prepared by Hon. Wm. Windom, Chairman of the Senatorial Committee on Transportation, which will be discussed, if not more definitely acted upon, during the present Congress. But Mr. Windom is looking much further forward; for, besides a “Bureau of Commerce,” he suggests another, to be designated the “Bureau of Industry,” to include agriculture, manufactures, mines, &c.

Department of Commerce in France.

The Department of Commerce, in France, was established in 1830, and the Minister is a member of the Cabinet. Conjointly with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he makes commercial treaties, *after consultation with the Chambers of Commerce.*

The Department includes two general divisions,—Home and Foreign. The division for Home Trade is subdivided into four bureaux, each of which is charged with numerous details; and the division for Foreign Trade is subdivided into three bureaux, to one of them being entrusted the subject of commercial treaties.

The Minister of Commerce, in France, is also Minister of Agriculture,—the latter Department embracing three bureaux, (1) relating to agricultural education; (2) relating to the encouragement of and giving assistance to agriculture; and (3) relating to the trade in Grain and Cattle, cattle-markets, slaughtering houses, Corn Exchanges, &c.

The Ministry of Commerce, &c., in Prussia.

Commercial affairs, so far as the German Empire is concerned, come under the jurisdiction of the Office of Foreign Affairs at Berlin.

The Imperial Prussian "Ministry of Commerce, Industries, and Public Works," has as its responsible head the Royal Prussian States Minister, who, in this connection bears the official title of Minister of Commerce, Industries, and Public Works. This Ministry is divided into four departments, and the business of each is superintended by Ministerial Directors. The first comprises the administration of Mining, Metallurgy, and the production of Salts; the second has the supervision and control of all Government railroads, and private railroad corporations; the third attends to all Government Building-matters, in reference to either land or hydraulic construction,—with the exception of railroad construction; the fourth Department has a care of all matters either directly or indirectly connected with Commerce and Industry. To this latter department belong any matters connected with Mechanical Industry, and manufactures; commercial law-courts, mercantile corporations, and artizan courts; Shipping, Marine Commissions in sea-ports, ship-owning, and Pilotage; Banking, Patents; Joint Stock, and Transport-Insurance-Companies; and the oversight of technical mercantile institutions.

An important point to be noted in connection with each of the general subjects embraced under these four Departments, is, that there are arrangements made for careful attention to the training of artizans, scientists, and parties intending to enter Governmental service.

The Situation in the Dominion of Canada.

In considering the necessity for a Department of Commerce, to be presided over by a Cabinet Minister, the reasoning and arguments used in favor of the proposal in Great Britain and in the United States apply equally in Canada,—the experience here being nearly the same, although necessarily on a smaller scale.

(1.) In the matter of printing and publishing the Census Tables of the Dominion,—while, possibly, the Minister of Commerce (had there been one) might not have preferred that the Agricultural, Industrial, and Shipping Statistics should be issued in advance of the Vital Statistics,—there can hardly be a doubt but that the whole work would have been printed before so many years had elapsed after the Census taking. Ere the third Census-volume is circulated, the middle of the next census decade will be not far off, and the question will then be, not so much—what of the past? as, what of the future?

(2.) It may be safely asserted, that, had there been a Minister of Commerce in the Dominion Cabinet, when the General Inspection Law was before Parliament in 1873, and again in 1874, it would not have been passed with so many glaring defects in it,—and its disagreement in a number of particulars with the spirit of the Weights and Measures Act, would surely have been prevented; while, as regards the working of the law, the difficulties experienced by Boards of Trade in giving effect to some of its provisions would have been promptly obviated.

(3.) The Minister of Commerce would undoubtedly be the proper member of the Cabinet to be entrusted with the arrangement of the general provisions and details of any proposed Treaty or Convention relating to Trade, and would be best qualified to deal with necessary Tariff changes.

(4.) Had there been a Minister of Commerce in the Canadian Cabinet, the anomaly could not have been allowed to exist, of thousands upon thousands of car-loads of various kinds of Produce passing through Canada from one United States port to an-

other, without let or hindrance,—while punctilious obstructiveness was observed relative to merchandise passing through the United States from one Canadian port to another.

It must, of course, be borne in mind, that when, at the time of Confederation, the number of Cabinet Ministers was increased, Canada had not sufficient breadth of experience upon which to base the assignment of duties to the new port-folios. Now, however, the Dominion Government might with eminent propriety and advantage establish a Department of Commerce, with a Cabinet Minister at its head, and also re-arrange the duties and functions of such other Ministers of the Crown as would be affected by the addition of an active Member to the Cabinet.

Without venturing to dogmatize upon what ought to be included in the working details of a Department of Commerce, among the first things to be attended to should be :—

The making of arrangements for collecting systematically full statistics relating to the products of the Dominion Fisheries.

The publication of a monthly statement of imports and exports, for each Province—with a summary for the Dominion—specifying dutiable and free goods, &c,—giving *quantities* as well as *values*.

Summaries of Foreign Commercial Statistics, and of Foreign Tariffs should be published from time to time.

There should be a Register kept of prices of the various kinds of Produce, &c., in the principal markets of the Dominion.

Statements should be published periodically showing the course and magnitude of the *internal commerce* of the Dominion—its nature, extent, and value—and its relations to foreign countries.

The *value* of the *freight* carried by railways, steamboats, &c.

The capital represented by railways, steamboats, &c., &c.

The earnings of railways, steamboats, &c.

NOTE.—The foregoing information relating to France and Germany is abridged from special communications received from Paris and Berlin, which contain many other interesting details on this subject.

